

PEER REVIEW: opinion or personal essay

STEP 1: Download/open your partner's essay draft from his/her student page on the wiki and save it on your computer with the file name **LastnameFirstname_Essay Draft 1 with Feedback**. (You will need to upload this file to your student page with the document with your typed answers to the peer review questions when you are finished.) You may also print your partner's draft if you prefer to read it on paper instead of on a computer screen and/or make comments on the draft by hand instead of using Microsoft Word. Either way, you **MUST** make some comments directly on your partner's draft **AS WELL AS** answer the peer review questions by typing out your responses in a separate document; if you make comments on your partner's draft using Word, use either the "comment" function (found under the "Insert" menu) or by formatting your comments in different text (such as a different font, bold letter, capital letters, or by using a different color text). Save the essay draft file with the proper file name (as indicated above) so you don't mess up the files on the wiki and replace your partner's original essay draft document.

STEP 2: Open a document in Microsoft Word, where you will type your responses to the questions below. **SAVE THE FILE RIGHT AWAY AND NAME IT PROPERLY**: your last name and first name or first initial, underscore or hyphen(_ or -), and the words feedback for Partner's Name. For example, **KeysStahl_Feedback for John Johnson**. You will upload this document to your student page along with your partner's essay draft file (as explained in STEP ONE).

NOTE: If you fail to follow the instructions in steps one and two, you will lose points for not completing the peer review process as required; that is, you will lose points from YOUR paper grade just like you would if you skipped or were very late for class on a peer review day.

STEP 3: Read your partner's draft all the way through once **without stopping**. Read the draft several more times, now more slowly and carefully, stopping to **circle any words you need to look up** and/or to **mark (by highlighting, bolding, or changing the color of the text) any sentences or sections that you find confusing or very unclear**. Pause to look up any definitions and to make notes next to any confusing or unclear sections, explaining why they are confusing or unclear and possibly writing a question or two to help your partner see what exactly you are confused about and, if possible, noting a suggestion for improvement or clarification.

STEP 4: Now you have a good sense of the essay's content, move on to the questions below. **MAKE SURE YOU ANSWER THE QUESTIONS COMPLETELY AND CORRECTLY by following the directions in a, b, c, and d (below)**. Write a **minimum** of one sentence per question (a, b, c, and d), totaling at least 4 sentences for each of your responses.

- a. Basic yes/no response
- b. **Identify specific parts of the draft** relating to each question.
- c. For each of the questions on this sheet, **explain your evaluation of each section of the draft you have identified in (b)** by saying **WHAT** the problem is and **WHY** it's a problem and/or **WHAT** is good about the section and **WHY** it's good.
- d. **Offer a suggestion for revision** for the sections you identify (in a, b, and c), being sure to indicate exactly what you think the writer could do to fix the problem and/or improve that part of the paper.

STEP 5: When you are finished, review your answers and notes/marks on the draft to make sure everything makes sense. **Then UPLOAD BOTH DOCUMENTS—your copy of your partner's draft with your comments in it AND your document with complete answers to the peer review questions—to YOUR OWN STUDENT PAGE, not your partner's page**. Upload your completed peer review documents to your own page because no student should mess with another's page; this way, only you are responsible for your own page. **Finally, SAVE your page AND CHECK TO MAKE SURE THE DOCUMENT LINKS WORK.**

BASICS

1. What kind of essay has your partner written—informative, expository, or argumentative? Has he/she chosen the best approach or would another approach be better? Why or why not?
2. Does the writer avoid the standard (and boring) 5-paragraph essay structure? Or does the essay resemble the 5-paragraph format too closely? In other words, has the writer attempted to write the essay in a more original, creative, and/or non-standard way? If not, suggest how the write could approach the essay differently by changing its structure, presentation of thesis, level of creativity or originality, etc. AND explain why its present approach doesn't work well.

INTRODUCTION

3. Does the introduction grab your attention and interest? Does it effectively focus the reader's attention on the topic and focus (purpose/thesis) of the essay? (Remember, the thesis doesn't have to be stated right away but the writer should at least suggest the essay's direction somehow.) In other words, does the logically introduce the topic and purpose of the essay and inspire some curiosity or interest in readers? Why or why not?

THESIS

4. What is the thesis? Is the thesis arguable? In other words, could you disagree with it, argue against it? Could the writer improve his/her thesis to make it more arguable? How? Evaluate the thesis and comment on why it does or doesn't work.
5. Do you feel that the writer's purpose (thesis) is either too broad or too narrow? Would the essay be better if the writer expanded his/her idea a bit more or narrowed it down to something a bit more specific? Does it try to cover too much or too little? Why or why not?
6. Does the thesis clearly answer the questions "so what?" and "who cares?" for the reader? In other words, has the writer given the reader something new, interesting, unique, original, and/or surprising to consider? Does thesis do more than simply present an observation or fact? Does it instead point out something others wouldn't normally notice or think about? Does it offer the reader a new perspective of some kind? In other words, does the writer say something meaningful about the topic that demonstrates critical thinking—something that readers likely have not considered or thought about?
7. What kind of thesis does the writer use—implicit or explicit? What kind of reasoning does he/she use—inductive or deductive? Where is the thesis placed in the essay—beginning, middle, end? Evaluate each of these features of the thesis (purpose) and explain whether you think the writer has made good, effective choices about communicating his/her thesis.

BODY

8. Does each body paragraph develop the thesis a little bit more? Does each body paragraph add meaning to the thesis? In other words, are the all body paragraphs logically connected to and clearly relate to the thesis? Do any of them go off topic or include irrelevant, unnecessary information? Which ones? Why do you think so?
9. Does each body paragraph have a clear topic sentence OR main idea? In other words, does each paragraph FOCUS on a single point that supports/helps explain the thesis? Or are there paragraphs with multiple or disconnected ideas? Which ones?
10. Has the writer balanced generalizations and specific detail well? Are there too many general ideas that make you, the reader, think "what does he/she mean?" Are there any places where you think there is way too much detail, which makes you, the reader, lose focus and wonder why the writer has included this information? Basically, do all the details clearly relate to the topic and thesis OR is there anything that just doesn't "fit" or make sense(is irrelevant or unnecessary) that the writer could delete?

11. Has the writer explained all of his/her ideas thoroughly and completely? Is all of the content clear and convincing? Or are you, as a reader, left with any unanswered questions? Does anything need to be explained more or explained better? What? Why?

12. Which rhetorical strategies has the writer used most? Are these rhetorical strategies the most appropriate ones for the topic and thesis? (Remember, these are: Illustration, Narration, Description, Classification, Compare/Contrast, Definition, Process, Cause/Effect, and Refutation.) Is there anywhere where a different strategy would improve the paper? Where? Why?

13. Is the essay well organized? Are the body paragraphs arranged in an order that makes sense—does each point follow the previous one in a logical way? Why or why not? How could the writer arrange sentences or paragraphs better?

AUDIENCE & TONE

14. How would you describe the writer's tone? Is it serious, playful, concerned, etc.? Is it too formal or informal? Is the writer's tone appropriate for the subject (topic), thesis (purpose), and audience (readers)? Consider things like whether the writer has balanced his/her use of diction appropriately (general vs. specific, concrete vs. abstract, mono vs. multi syllable words, figurative language) and if he/she has tried to use vivid, interesting, SPECIFIC nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs. Explain your evaluation.

15. Does the writer consider his/her readers thoughtfully, being careful not to say anything to unnecessarily offend, anger, or show disrespect to readers? Explain your answer.

CONCLUSION

16. Does the conclusion effectively bring the paper to a close, making it feel "finished"? Is it logical and make sense? Does it avoid introducing new ideas (it should avoid this)? Does it restate the thesis clearly in words that are different from the thesis?

17. Does it offer a closing thought, giving readers something to keep thinking about? (For example, a warning, prediction for the future, suggestion, instructions, question to think about, call the readers to action, etc.)? (It should.)

OVERALL EVALUATION

18. Do you feel like you have learned something by reading this essay? Has the writer worked hard to offer his/her readers something interesting and meaningful to think about? Why or why not?

19. Overall, when you finished reading the essay, are you convinced? In other words, is the essay persuasive? Why or why not?

20. How does the essay "flow"? Are there too many short sentences or too many long sentences? Does the writer use transition words (however, therefore, in addition, etc.)? Are there any major errors that disrupt reading? Be specific in your answer by explaining what the effect of sentences, transitions (or lack thereof), and/or errors have on the reader.